

A SERIOUS
ADDRESS
TO THE
ELECTORS OF GREAT-BRITAIN,

ON THE
SUBJECT
OF
SHORT PARLIAMENTS,
AND AN
EQUAL REPRESENTATION.

LONDON:

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(Price SIX-PENCE.)

A SERIES

ADDRESSES

TO THE

LECTORS OF GREAT BRITAIN

OF THE

ROYAL SOCIETY

OF



SHORT

EXPLANATION

LONDON:

Printed by J. G. BARNETT, (formerly of the Admiralty) of the

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ELECTORS OF GREAT BRITAIN.

FRIENDS and COUNTRYMEN,

THE evils that have arisen from long Parliaments, and the present unequal state of Representation among us, have been so sensibly felt, especially of late, that the necessity of a reformation seems very forcibly to be impressed on the minds of the people in general. The justice and expediency * of a change in these particulars has been very frequently the subject of discussion; and almost every thing that *can* be said on the popular side of the question (and very little indeed ever has, or ever

A 2 can

* Perhaps it is one of the strongest arguments in favour of short Parliaments, and an equal representation, that the opponents of these measures (particularly *in* Parliament) have been reduced to the distinction between justice and expedience. But can any thing be inexpedient, that is at the same time just?

can be said on the other side) has already been urged by wise and good men, both in and out of Parliament; yet their arguments, however convincing, are dispersed in publications too scarce and too voluminous to be purchased or perused by the generality of those who stand most in need of information. The *plain good sense* of the Electors of Great Britain, however clearly it may point out the propriety of a reform, is not always sufficient to suggest to them the particular arguments that prove this. Hence, that the means of information on this very important question, might no longer be wanting, and that every favourer of short Parliaments and an equal Representation, throughout the kingdom, might be able to give a reason for the hope that is in him, I have thought it adviseable to extract, from a variety of publications, the principal arguments which have occasioned a change in these particulars, to become a popular measure among men of honesty and understanding. One book, (Burgh's Political Disquisitions) would have rendered this publication unnecessary, had it not been too dear and too prolix for men who have little time or money to spare, (and men of this description form the most valuable class of people in this kingdom;) but to those who have both, I would most earnestly recommend the purchase and perusal of it. You have, therefore, my friends, in this little tract,

1st.

1st. More arguments in number than are to be found in any other publication extant that I know of. 2dly. You have those arguments in a much smaller compass; so that their force may be more readily perceived, and their contents more easily remembered; 3dly, You have them drawn out more regularly and orderly, and less mixed with extraneous matter; and 4thly, You have the same information at a cheaper rate than in any other similar production.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

The subject we are upon, next to religious subjects, is of all others the most important. It concerns your country and posterity in general, and yourselves and your children in particular. Let me intreat you, therefore, to peruse the following pages with patience, and without prepossession. If the arguments advanced appear to you conclusive, adopt them as principles, and act in conformity to them: if they seem *otherwise*, do not be content merely with *not supporting* the measures they are meant to enforce, oppose them, be active in endeavouring to stop them, and shew that *you also* act from principle, by letting your exertions on the side your conscience dictates, be as strong as those of your opponents. For this reason, my friends, hear with attention, and consider with calmness, what may be urged on the other side; but if the result (as I make no doubt

doubt it will) be a full conviction of the truth of what follows, above all things *be not lukewarm*: You, and you only, are the persons in whose power it is to bring about this regeneration of our Constitution, that seems so absolutely necessary to our political salvation; and I sincerely pray God Almighty, to give you not only understanding to distinguish the truth, but FIRMNESS to support it.

Arguments for short Parliaments.

I. It is a fact, that men in general are too fond of power to part with it easily, when it can by any means be preserved: the longer they are in power, the more apt they are to lose sight of their original creators; and the more time and opportunity they have to continue unjustly an office they ought to lay down. Hence the duration of the long parliament, the pension parliament, the septennial bill, &c.

II. The greater power it be that is entrusted, the shorter should be the time it is entrusted for: but legislative power is the greatest, it ought therefore to be the shortest.

III. Power entrusted for a long time is apt to be monopolized by families; this is notoriously the case with the legislative power of the Commons of England.

IV. A man may be a fit representative this year, but not so the next; for instance, he may be independent

pendent this year, but extravagance may reduce him the next; is it not then imprudent, and contrary to the *principles* of election, to continue the same man five years longer? The same unfitness may arise from illness, change of principles, by sinister practices, &c. Is not this too much the case with us?

V. The longer the time of continuance in office, the fewer can be chosen into it; thus if Parliaments were annual, seven times the number might, and twice or thrice the number probably would be chosen; which would not only encrease political liberty (according to Priestly's definition of it) but would also extend political knowledge, because more men of fortune would think it worth while to attend to national affairs than now do; it would also give his Majesty and the nation, an opportunity of consulting, possibly seven times, probably two or three times the number they now do.

VI. Length of Parliaments destroys responsibility: it is much more easy to investigate the transactions of one year than of seven, beside that it makes the Members more independent of the people.

VII. It is possible a law, when enacted, may have consequences unforeseen previous to its passing; but the Parliament that enacted it will be much more likely to continue it, than a new one

which is unbiassed : hence in this case we are likely to suffer the inconvenience of a bad law much longer in a long than a short Parliament.

VIII. It has always been observed, that toward the close of a Parliament, those Members *whose election depends upon the people*, have been particularly cautious in their conduct, in hopes of being re-elected. This is the reason that the place bill has been so frequently passed, just before a general election. Hence it follows that the more frequent general elections are, the greater number of good laws will be passed.

IX. The long duration of Parliament checks the ardour, and damps the hopes of those patriots who oppose the evil measures of a bad one. In a short Parliament their alacrity would be greater, and therefore their endeavours more successful.

X. It is much easier to bribe *one set* of men who are to continue seven years, than *seven sets*, of one year each. Annual Parliaments would therefore be much more honest, and much more independent than septennial ones.

XI. It is scarce worth a *Minister's while* to bribe a member for one year's service, who might on that very account be non-elected the next year ; but it is well worth while to bribe a member for seven years service, because the latter is likely to answer the end of the Minister, more than the former, in the proportion of seven to one.

XII. It

XII. It is scarce worth a *Member's while* to accept of a bribe for one year's service, when he might on that very account be non-elected the next year. But the case is different, if he can sell himself for seven years. For instance, suppose the bribe be 1000l. a year, it is scarce worth while for a gentleman of fortune and character to commence rogue, and ruin himself for 1000l. But there are many who would think 7000l. a sufficient inducement, because considering the consequence annexed to money, 7000l. would cover a multitude of sins: add too

XIII. That in the former case (i. e. annual Parliaments) for the reason above given, the person bribed would have very few to keep him in countenance; in the latter (i. e. septennial Parliaments) we know from woeful experience, that he will have great numbers. This is a strong inducement.

XIV. Short Parliaments will secure the virtue of the *electors*; for it is scarce worth while to give or receive a bribe for one year's vote, but it may be thought otherwise for seven. Again, suppose that on an average, the Electors of Great Britain might be bribed at five guineas a man and not under; it is evident, that if Parliaments were annual, and a man had an inclination to purchase votes, he must give thirty-five guineas a piece for what he may now accomplish for five guineas. So
that

that it is on an average exactly seven to one in favour of the independence of annual Parliaments above septennial.

XV. A seat in septennial Parliaments, therefore, being liable to become a job, it will follow from the principle of self interest, that a man in a septennial Parliament will give his first and greatest attention to his private interest, and that the interests of the nation will be only a secondary consideration; nor is it to be supposed that any one will give from 3 to 5000l. for a seat in Parliament, merely to serve the public. But a seat in short Parliaments not being so liable to become a job, the interests of the nation will be attended to in the first instance.

XVI. Short Parliaments would lessen the number of controverted elections: for controverted elections generally arise from some sinister practices, on the side of one or all of the candidates: but if the candidates did not intend to make a gain of the office, if the good of their country were the true motive of their offering themselves, they would make use of no sinister practices. The good of the nation is most likely to be attended to, and a seat is the least likely to become a job in short, than in long Parliaments, therefore, controverted elections would be fewer in the former than the latter. When is there a riot at the election of an overseer, a churchwarden, a common

mon council-man, or an alderman? there is not so much opportunity of making money in these offices, as in a seat in Parliament; and where nothing is to be gotten, the election is peaceably conducted.

XVII. Lessening the number of controverted elections would afford more time to the Members to attend to public business, than they now have. A session is nearly taken up in these days before we know who are, and who are not our representatives. In short Parliaments, therefore, the members will not only be more unbiaſſed, more honest, and more capable of minding their country's interest, but more at leisure also, than in long ones.

XVIII. Long Parliaments detract from political liberty; for they necessarily exclude a great number of qualified gentlemen from enjoying the privilege of serving their country in that department. In the year 1766, it was found that sixty members had served in four Parliaments, thirty-one in five, sixteen in six, three in seven, two in eight, one in nine, and one in ten.

XIX. *Nemo repente fuit turpissimus!* No man ever became a scoundrel all at once. A number of Members come into the House without a design of being corrupted, who cannot withstand repeated attacks upon their honesty. Hence in long Parliaments, a corrupt Minister has more oppor-

tunities of diffusing dishonesty than in short ones, where the time is wanting.

XX. The ignorance that prevails among men of fortune, concerning the very first principles of Government, in such a country as England, is astonishing. To this ignorance, must be imputed the absurd defences of the justice and expediency of the war with our American brethren; particularly in Parliament. Short Parliaments, by extending the chance of becoming a Member, to a much greater number of people of fortune, would induce a proportionably greater number to turn their minds to political studies, who now neglect them, because they have not so good an opportunity of making use of that knowledge when acquired. Hence it is probable, from this reason alone, that the American war would never have been commenced by an annual Parliament; and I am afraid every septennial one may be called a "lack-learning Parliament," with as much propriety as Sir Edward Coke's "*Parliamentum Indictum*."

XXI. Short Parliaments, by causing men of estates to look up to the people as the source of their honour, and as the persons to whom they are to be obliged, tend to introduce the idea of equality, and consequently a spirit of independence.

XXII. The

XXII. In long Parliaments, from the causes before mentioned a great part of the Minister's time is taken up in bribing members to secure a majority; (what is called settling themselves in office;) hence the *nation's* business being neglected, more bribery becomes necessary to screen the neglect, hence more and more dishonesty, neglect, and want of opportunity; hence an expenditure of the public money in doing ill, and consequently heavier taxes to enable the Minister to do any thing well.—Is this our case, or is it not?

The objections usually urged against short Parliaments are these:

I. The principal reason alledged for extending the last triennial Parliament to four years more; was an apprehension that a majority of Tories and Jacobites would be returned.

A N S W E R.

And what if a majority of Tories and Jacobites were returned, had not the nation a right to return whom it pleased? But the apprehension was ridiculous, and was urged only, to cover (however slightly) that infamous and tyrannical measure; and if it were then ridiculous, surely it is much more so now.

II. Short Parliaments by multiplying general elections, multiply the evils attendant on general elections;

elections ; such as tumults, idleness, drunkenness, &c.

A N S W E R.

The fact itself is false, and the argument itself is obviated by Sect. XVI. preceding : the causes of these tumults, &c. are an unequal representation and the Septennial Act, which by making a seat in Parliament a matter of private importance, induces the candidates to make use of sinister practices, which are the true cause of these tumults, this will need no proof to those who can recollect the Cases of any one, or any number of controverted elections. As I have already said, Argument XVI. What tumults or riotings happen at the election of a churchwarden, an overseer or a common-council man ? But if these offices were worth 4 or 5000l. (like a seat in Parliament) is it not reasonable to suppose there would be contentions for them ? and if contentions, tumults, &c. ? Is it not moreover remarkable that but two or three instances of a controverted election in an annual Parliament occurs for two hundred and eighteen years ; and not one double return ?

III. But it is not worth a gentleman's while to accept of a seat in a short Parliament, hence you would find a difficulty in procuring members.

A N S W E R.

If it be not worth a gentleman's while, so much the better ; it is the very thing we are aiming at, to take

take away every possible private influence, so that the good of the public and its interests may be regarded as the one thing needful. Take away the causes of interestedness and public spirit will again flourish, so that in short Parliaments we shall have plenty of public spirited members.

Is that the case now ?

IV. But in short Parliaments (annual for instance) there is not time to bring any plan of consequence for the public good to bear.

A N S W E R.

No ? More shame for the members who are so negligent in their duty, and whose time is taken up in examining the instances of bribery and perjury that intervenes between their own members and the electors whom they have been endeavouring to corrupt. But was there never a good law enacted before the Septennial Act ? Does not a great part of our present code of laws stand chiefly upon what was acknowledged to be law, or what was made law under annual Parliaments ?

V. But it is said that foreign nations will not put confidence in a legislature so fluctuating as annual Parliaments.

A N S W E R.

Did foreign nations ever put confidence in our legislature when Parliaments were annual or not ? If they did, the question is decided. Besides, the confidence

confidence that foreign nations will put in us, will be in proportion to the confidence subsisting between the King and the people.

I know of nothing else that has ever been urged on the side of long Parliaments that deserves to be taken notice of, but I doubt not, should any thing else be proposed in their favour it may be answered full as easily as the above.

Before I say any thing in favour of an equal representation, I beg leave to draw out two tables, which, I think, will almost supersede the necessity of any thing farther being urged in favour of this measure.

England sends five hundred and thirteen Members to Parliament. Let the land-tax be divided into five hundred and thirteen parts, and the following Table will shew what proportion each county pays of the land-tax, and what number of members it sends. Thus, Cornwall pays eight parts out of five hundred and thirteen of the land-tax, and sends forty-four members : Middlesex pays eighty, and sends eight members.

Counties.		Parts.	Members.
Bedford,	—	7	4
Berks,	—	10	9
Bucks,	—	12	14
Cambridge,	—	9	6
Cheshire,	—	7	4
Cornwall,	—	8	44
Cumberland,			

Counties.			Parts.	Members.
Cumberland,	—	—	1	6
Derby,	—	—	6	4
Devon,	—	—	21	26
Dorset,	—	—	9	20
Durham,	—	—	3	4
Effex,	—	—	24	8
Gloucester,	—	—	12	8
Hereford,	—	—	5	8
Hertford	—	—	11	6
Huntingdon,	—	—	4	4
Kent,	—	—	22	18
Lancaster,	—	—	5	14
Leicester,	—	—	9	4
Lincoln,	—	—	19	12
Middlesex,	—	—	80	9
Monmouth,		—	3	3
Norfolk,	—	—	22	12
Northampton,	—	—	12	9
Northumberland,		—	4	8
Nottingham,	—	—	7	8
Oxford,	—	—	10	9
Rutland,	—	—	2	2
Salop,	—	—	7	12
Somerfet,	—	—	19	18
Southampton,		—	14	26
Stafford,	—	—	7	10
Suffolk,	—	—	20	16
Surrey,	—	—	18	14
		C		Suffex,

Counties.	Parts.	Members.
Suffex, — — —	18	28
Warwick, — — —	10	6
Westmoreland, — — —	1	4
Wilts, — — —	13	34
Worcester, — — —	9	9
Wales, — — —	11	24
York, — — —	24	30
Total, — — —	513	513

But if property gives a claim to representation, the number of parts paid ought to be the same with the number of members. Thus the number of members for Cornwall should be eight, and of Middlesex eighty.

The former table related to property. The following relates to numbers. To the following I would premise, that I have not put down the whole number of the electors in any place, because the members are sent by the majority only, for the minority are never of any consequence.

TABLE of Places where the Majority of Electors are under Fifty.

Leftwithiel sends 2 members chosen by 13
The majority of 24.

Truro	—	—	2	—	—	14
Bodmin	—	—	2	—	—	19
Helfton	—	—	2	—	—	34
						Saltash

Saltash	—	—	2	—	—	—	15
Camelford	—	—	2	—	—	—	10
Westlaw	—	—	2	—	—	—	40
Grampound	—	—	2	—	—	—	5
Eastlow	—	—	2	—	—	—	25
Bossiney	—	—	2	—	—	—	11
Fowey	—	—	2	—	—	—	26
St. Germain's	—	—	2	—	—	—	26
St. Michael	—	—	2	—	—	—	14
Newport	—	—	2	—	—	—	31
St. Mawes	—	—	2	—	—	—	16
Bereafon	—	—	2	—	—	—	36
Tiverton	—	—	2	—	—	—	14
Lyme, Dorset.	—	—	2	—	—	—	26
Malden, Essex	—	—	2	—	—	—	14
Harwich	—	—	2	—	—	—	17
Weobly, Hereford	—	—	2	—	—	—	43
Aldborough	—	—	2	—	—	—	43
Edmondsbury	—	—	2	—	—	—	20
Bletchingley	—	—	2	—	—	—	46
Gatton	—	—	2	—	—	—	11
Haslemere	—	—	2	—	—	—	31
Horsham	—	—	2	—	—	—	33
New Shoreham	—	—	2	—	—	—	36
East Grinstead	—	—	2	—	—	—	19
Malmesbury	—	—	2	—	—	—	7
Bedwin	—	—	2	—	—	—	41
Luggerhall	—	—	2	—	—	—	36
Beudley	—	—	2	—	—	—	8
C	2					Knareborough	

Knareborough	—	2	—	—	26
Scarborough		2	—	—	20
Thirsk	—	2	—	—	23
Haydon	—	2	—	—	42
Broughbridge	—	2	—	—	33
Aldborough	—	2	—	—	38
Queenborough	—	2	—	—	36
Newton, Lancaster		2	—	—	31
Clithero	—	2	—	—	46
Grimsby	—	2	—	—	41
Thetford, Norfolk		2	—	—	17
Castle Rising	—	2	—	—	16
Brackley	—	2	—	—	17
Banbury	—	2	—	—	10
Bath	—	2	—	—	17
Melborne	—	2	—	—	26
Yarmouth	—	2	—	—	26
Newport, Isle of					
Wight	—	2	—	—	13
Stockbridge	—	2	—	—	26
Newton Isle of					
Wight	—	2	—	—	1
Christchurch, Hamp-					
shire	—	2	—	—	7
Lymington	—	2	—	—	41
Whitchurch	—	2	—	—	21
Andover	—	2	—	—	13
Dunwich	—	2	—	—	21
Orford	—	2	—	—	41
					Bramber

Bramber	—	—	2	—	—	8
New Sarum	—	—	2	—	—	29
Old Sarum	—	—	2	—	—	1
Wilton	—	—	2	—	—	41
Downton	—	—	2	—	—	31
Hindon	—	—	2	—	—	31
Haytesbury	—	—	2	—	—	26
Westbury	—	—	2	—	—	26
Calne	—	—	2	—	—	18
Hythe	—	—	2	—	—	26
New Romney	—	—	2	—	—	17
Winchelsea	—	—	2	—	—	21
Seaford Cinque P.	—	—	2	—	—	21
Beaumaris	—	—	1	—	—	13
Montgomery	—	—	1	—	—	41
Steyning	—	—	2	—	—	41
Marlborough	—	—	2	—	—	2
Droitwich	—	—	2	—	—	21
Buckingham	—	—	2	—	—	7

Observe now the contrast between these and two or three other places.

Sheffield	—	—	0	—	—	—
Birmingham	—	—	0	—	—	—
Manchester	—	—	0	—	—	—
Liverpoole	—	—	2	—	—	—
Bristol	—	—	2	—	—	—
London	—	—	4	—	—	—
Westminster	—	—	2	—	—	—
Southwark	—	—	2	—	—	—

Does this require a comment ?

Th

The arguments for an equal representation are principally these :

I. By the present mode, six-sevenths of the people at least are deprived of that privilege of election which their numbers and their property give them a claim to.

II. The present state of representation, by affording the means, encourages the growth of all the evils mentioned in the arguments for short Parliaments ; such as bribery, corruption, perjury, ministerial influence, &c.

III. The privilege of representation is not only denied to those who have a right to it, but it is allowed to those who of all others ought not to have it, the perjured and corrupted boroughs.

IV. In the present state of representation, the sense of the people is not always expressed by the majority in the House of Commons. On the two subjects I am now treating of, I may venture to say, that the sense of the House of Commons has frequently proved directly opposite to the sense of the people ; this was also the case at the Middlesex election.

V. If it be true that no man is bound by laws, to which he has not by himself, or his representative, consented, many hundred thousands in England are not bound by the laws of it.

It has been alledged, that it is not in the power of the House of Commons to deprive the boroughs of

of their privileges of election, because they are a part of the Constitution, and a freehold is annexed to them.

A N S W E R.

Whether of its own motion the Parliament can, or cannot alter the representation, yet the majority of the kingdom certainly may: for what cannot the majority of any society do? The privileges of these boroughs were granted on the supposition that they were for the general good. When they are no longer for the general good, ought they to be continued?

FRIENDS AND COUNTRYMEN,

I have been endeavouring to lead you to consider the two very serious subjects, the length of Parliaments, and the inequality of representation. They have long appeared to wise and good men the engines whereby Ministers have been able to perform so many things, contrary to the desires and interests of the people, to extend their own influence and the influence of the Crown, in detriment to the rights of the people, and to rivet the chains of slavery so strong, that it requires no small exertion to break them. While the causes continue, the evil effects which flow from them must encrease, and consequently in the end they will totally overthrow that Constitution we now so much boast of, though perhaps with so little reason.—

Unless,

Unless, therefore, you join as one man in the cause, heartily and sincerely, in proportion to the exertions you *might* have made, you will become accessary to the ruin of your country, and deserve the execrations of your posterity. Think of this ; rouse from your political lethargy ; examine these important questions, and act as your judgment shall direct.

Some of you may be apt to say, "What have I to do with politics ? I know nothing of it, and my voice is of very little consequence."

Hold ! you *have* to do with politics. — Had the state of representation been equal, and had the duration of Parliaments been shortened, prior to the accession of Lord North to the head of the Ministry, (that is to say, had you done then what you are now for your own good called upon to do) it would have been impossible for him to have carried so many ruinous measures as he did. What has been the consequence ? I beg your serious attention for one minute : — The American war is one of the blessed effects of that administration. We will say nothing at present, of the loss of trade, of the waste of blood, of the domestic miseries, of the defalcation of the empire, of the national ridicule and dishonour, and of the universal discontent among us, occasioned by that baneful measure ; I mean to appeal to you on the increase of expence only which it has brought upon us. Lord North
has

has always been held forth as an excellent financier:
attend to the proof of it.

Amount of the funded	Principal.	Inst. & Anna
debt, June 25, 1775 }		
	122954000	43680000

Ditto after the budget	}	196354000
1782, including a no-		
nominal capital (i. e.		
(nominal to the len-		
ders but real to the		
nation) of 15900000		

Unfunded debt compu-	}	3000000
ted at upwards of		

Increase of interest and	}	- - - - - 3148125
annuities since the		
war		

Average increase of an-	}	18000000
nual expences occa-		
sioned by the war		
about		

Total increase of ex-	}	126000000
pence from the com-		
mencement of the		
war to this year		

D

In

In the above account the usual douceurs of lotteries, discount, interest and annuities in advance, &c. are not taken notice of ; and it is *scarce worth while* to dwell upon the circumstances naturally suggested by extracting that account ; such as the prostitution of the sinking fund ; the wanton addition of nominal capital to the national debt ; the disposal of 40,200,000*l.* of the nation's money within six years, without the consent of Parliament, under the head of extraordinaries ; the quashing of every motion tending to investigate these matters ; omitting these, I say, and some few other trifles, (the effects of his Lordship's admirable skill as minister and financier) suffice it to observe that it appears by the above account we are obliged to Lord North for the taxes to the amount of 3,148,125*l.* a year, which is more than equal to a land-tax of *six shillings* in the pound : and though these taxes are distributed, so that they do not appear at first sight so enormous as they really are, yet you must all be sensible that the same money will not now purchase the same conveniencies as formerly ; and that a man can scarce live for 125*l.* a year now so well as he formerly could for 100*l.* Hence, if you live now as well as you did some years ago, you may thank Lord North and your own passiveness, for an addition of one fourth to your annual expence, without the addition of one comfort or convenience in return. All which
might

might have been prevented, had you made these exertions in *your own favour* seven or eight years ago, which you have at this moment an opportunity of making. *And have you then athing to do with politics?*

But you have a sufficient knowledge of politics also. Does it require any great depth of penetration to see, that if you have the same property, and are of the same consequence to the State as another man, you have a right to the same privileges of representation? But your voice is of consequence too; for by the majority of such voices as yours the question must be carried.

Upon the whole, ask yourselves the question, "Do the foregoing arguments appear to me to be just?" If they do, as friends to your country, as members of a community, as religious men, as honest men, as parents, let *me* also ask you a question.

You are convinced of the justice of the cause, and you know that as far as your voice and interest can go, you can be of service to your country in this respect, and will you sit idle and unconcerned?

As members of the community, you are bound to be of all the service in your power to the community: you *now* can be of service; this is the expected time, this is the hour for exertion, and will you make none?

As religious and as honest men, I appeal to you ; the present circumstances of Parliament are notoriously productive of bribery, perjury, avarice, and every kind of dishonesty ; and will you not assist in cutting off the source of this depravity ?

In proportion as the good of your country is attended to, and its interests increase, the private circumstances of every man flourish : in proportion as destructive measures are pursued, and their causes are supported, the private circumstances of each member of society decay : have you *felt* this of late years or not ? how then, (setting your *own* interest aside,) can you answer it to your posterity, that when it was in your power, by opposing ruinous and unconstitutional proceedings, to leave them in circumstances more respectable, and in a country more eligible to live in ; careless of their interests as well as your own, you left them in circumstances much less respectable, and in a country much less eligible than you might have done.

Consider these, my friends ; do not withdraw your active support from the side your consciences espouse — And if, after all the usual methods of application have been tried in vain, your grievances continue unregarded and unredressed, follow the example of your glorious neighbours the Irish, and adopt that mode of proceeding which will enable you to say with safety and certainty, *we will have our rights.*

P. S.

P. S. I cannot resist the inclination of once more offering my sentiments upon the plan that should be adopted to obtain a reformation in the circumstances of Parliament. I do not think that Parliament, as such, has any right to alter the mode of representation, or to abridge its own duration; for by the same reason whereby it may do this, it may *extend* its own duration, and alter the constitution at its own pleasure. I do not think, moreover, that Parliament has any right to go into the matter, till it be *ascertained* that it is the wish of the majority of the nation that it should do so; and then not as Parliament, but as persons appointed for the special purpose, and in conformity to the commands or requisitions of the nation, in whose power alone it is to alter, or authorize any alteration of the constitution. By the constitution, I mean that frame of government, or collection of fundamental laws, which, being supposed the peculiar act of the *people themselves*, no lesser power has any authority to alter; but Parliament, and the mode whereby it is so, are only the effects and consequences of this act of the people, and they only should be required to undo what they alone had power to do. Add also, that if Parliament were to alter that part of the constitution by which itself is appointed, the act would either be void ab initio, or else from
that

that moment it would cease to be legally a Parliament. For these reasons, I think the mode, at present likely to be adopted, (viz. that of *County Petitions*) defective in two particulars, first, I does not *clearly determine* whether the majority of the nation be for the measure or not, nor does it give a comparative view of the numbers pro and con; and secondly, It seems (as consisting of *petitions*) to acknowledge the right in Parliament of proceeding upon the matter of its own authority, and also that the petitioners (i. e. the makers of the Parliament, in fact) are *ex vi termini* inferior to the petitioned; but I apprehend that the people collectively are superior in every respect to the Parliament collectively.

Hence, I think, that the sense of the majority should be ascertained in the first instance; and secondly, that the mode should be by memorial, demand, command, or requisition, *not by petition*. The mode I would propose, is that published in the London Courant of Oct. 28, 1782, which is briefly this: Let County Meetings of the electors be called. At each meeting let an affirmative and a negative roll of parchment be provided, at the top of each of which let the question be stated. Let the electors present sign which they please in the presence of each other. Let the subscribers of the affirmative roll, at the end of their names, put the number of years to which they

they would have the duration of Parliament limited. The rolls throughout the kingdom being collected, would ascertain the sense of the nation indisputably ; at least of that part of the nation which chose to take an active part in the matter, and that which did not, would evidently, by its silence, manifest an acquiescence in the determination of that which did. Let a memorial be presented to Parliament, authorizing it to take into consideration the matter in question, and requiring the business to be begun by one, and completed by another certain day.

*Si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti; si non, his utere mecum.*

C.

T H E E N D.

